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Essay

Americans in Athens: learning from documenta 14

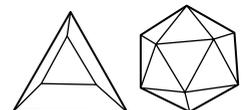
Adrian Anagnost and
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Abstract

This essay offers a critical account of socially-engaged works by United States artists at documenta in Athens, Greece, in 2017. Focusing on William Pope.L's Whispering Campaign and Rick Lowe's Victoria Square Project, this article examines the status of Greek history for works by international artists and the challenges of transplanting long-running artistic strategies to new locations. It argues that social practices face the same challenges of translation as artworks in other media, and that social practice is, ultimately, site specific.

Keywords

social practice, social sculpture, migration, Athens, documenta, site specificity





Americans in Athens: learning from documenta 14

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A claim: Social practice is site specific. When art operates as social practice, its forms, meanings, and possibilities of communicability are dependent upon particular social groups and settings, and are not always able to be moved. Here, we take social practice as a body of work in which an artist deploys his or her social position as artist in order to generate financial, institutional, and logistical support for a project that materially benefits other, non-art world, folk.¹

Social practice can encompass a range of artistic activities, taking the form of community service(s), dialogic encounters, social justice initiatives, speculative economies, public awareness campaigns, social welfare programs, et cetera. The phrase “social practice” has been called a “West Coast term” by curator Nato Thompson, whose 2011 Creative Time exhibition *Living as Form* was one of the most visible efforts at canon formation for this genre in the visual arts.² Already in the mid-2000s, however, performance studies scholar Shannon Jackson was writing on the term “social practice” not as geographically-rooted, but as a concept that emerged at the disciplinary intersection of visual arts, (postdramatic) theater, and activism.³ Linguistically, the term seems to originate in German-language art criticism of the mid-1990s, with particular energy around the activities of Austrian collective *Wochenklausur*.⁴ And *Wochenklausur*’s increased visibility in the United States during the early 2000s offers one possible trajectory for the term’s adoption with regards to U.S.-based practices.

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Commonly, the forms and meanings of social practice have been linked to an individual artist, as a sort of brand identity. Thomas Hirschhorn, for example, deploys the Frankfurt School and high culture in the service of marginalized communities on the outskirts of city centers; his works are presumed to be equally intelligible in a Paris banlieu (Musée Précaire Albinet, 2004) and a Bronx housing project (Gramsci Monument, 2013). Tania Bruguera uses pedagogy and collectivism to give voice to the disenfranchised, whether Cuban artists and dissidents (Arte de Conducta, 2002–09; Tatlin's Whisper #6, 2009) or immigrants sans papiers in Queens (Immigrant Movement International, 2011–16). What often gets lost in the critical and art historical response to these projects is that they can be more or less convincing, more or less successful, in different social situations. So, then, a normative claim: As social practice art comprises an ever-growing share of international mega-exhibitions, organizers and participants will have to grapple with challenges of translation and duration, with the possibility that social practice may demand that each artist roots his or her practice in a single locale. Or, with the possibility that (acknowledging, of course, the protean make-up of any given community) authorship of social practice must be accorded to the collective. Otherwise, the Volk are merely a social practice artist's material.⁵

This essay takes the case of artworks presented in Athens, Greece, as part of the 2017 documenta exhibition, which was split between Kassel, Germany, and Athens, Greece. For, as Lutz Hengst has noted, it remains a question “whether the division of ... documenta [14] between two main venues, Athens in addition to Kassel, can embody a renunciation of Eurocentrism; or whether other, location-aware forms serve to better make visible asymmetries between population groups as a global problem per se, and also in themselves mostly heterogeneous contemporary cultures.”⁶

William Pope.L's *Whispering Campaign*

Trying valiantly to find the “whispering” works by Chicago-based

artist William Pope.L, doubly intrigued after reading a laudatory review:

“an especially lovely piece, effectively penetrating the viewer's psyche. (At one moment, I thought I was hearing voices in my head.)”⁷

But, like so much of documenta in Athens, failing to find the artwork was more rewarding.

Standing beneath the equestrian statue of King Constantine I: a group of three adults, from two continents (North America, Europe), plus two tiny children, in the public park Pedion tou Areas, one of the sites for William Pope.L's *Whispering Campaign*. But somehow they had arrived from the wrong direction. On documenta's map, *Whispering Campaign* was just inside the park at this monument to Greek history. But the group walked the long way through the park, entering at Evelpidon Street, where a miniature tent city housed rough sleepers. Some of the tent city's inhabitants appeared to be migrants from outside Greece; some (both native Greek and foreign) were visibly using drugs; there also appeared to be prostitution occurring.⁸ Farther along was Constantine I. The group climbed his platform and stood quietly, hearing nothing. After poking around the bushes, looking for speakers hidden there, they stared expectantly at each passerby, waiting for them to linger and confide “elliptical yet biting aphorisms about race and color.”⁹ A lone man in exercise gear seemed to pause, but no one was sure how to activate the work — was the jogger even a part of it? Someone suggested approaching the police officer in the corner of the plaza, to ask: “Where is the art?”

Pope.L's *Whispering Campaign* was described as a multi-site sound piece of live performances and recorded voices, a sort of eavesdropping on Athens' subliminal life. Its “social” component came in part during the process of making, when Pope.L asked Athens natives to speak about their city. The social also arose in the work's reception, as murmured messages allowed Athens psychogeographies to infiltrate the consciousness of urban dwellers and documenta visitors. Ideally, the work offered a disembodied and, more importantly,

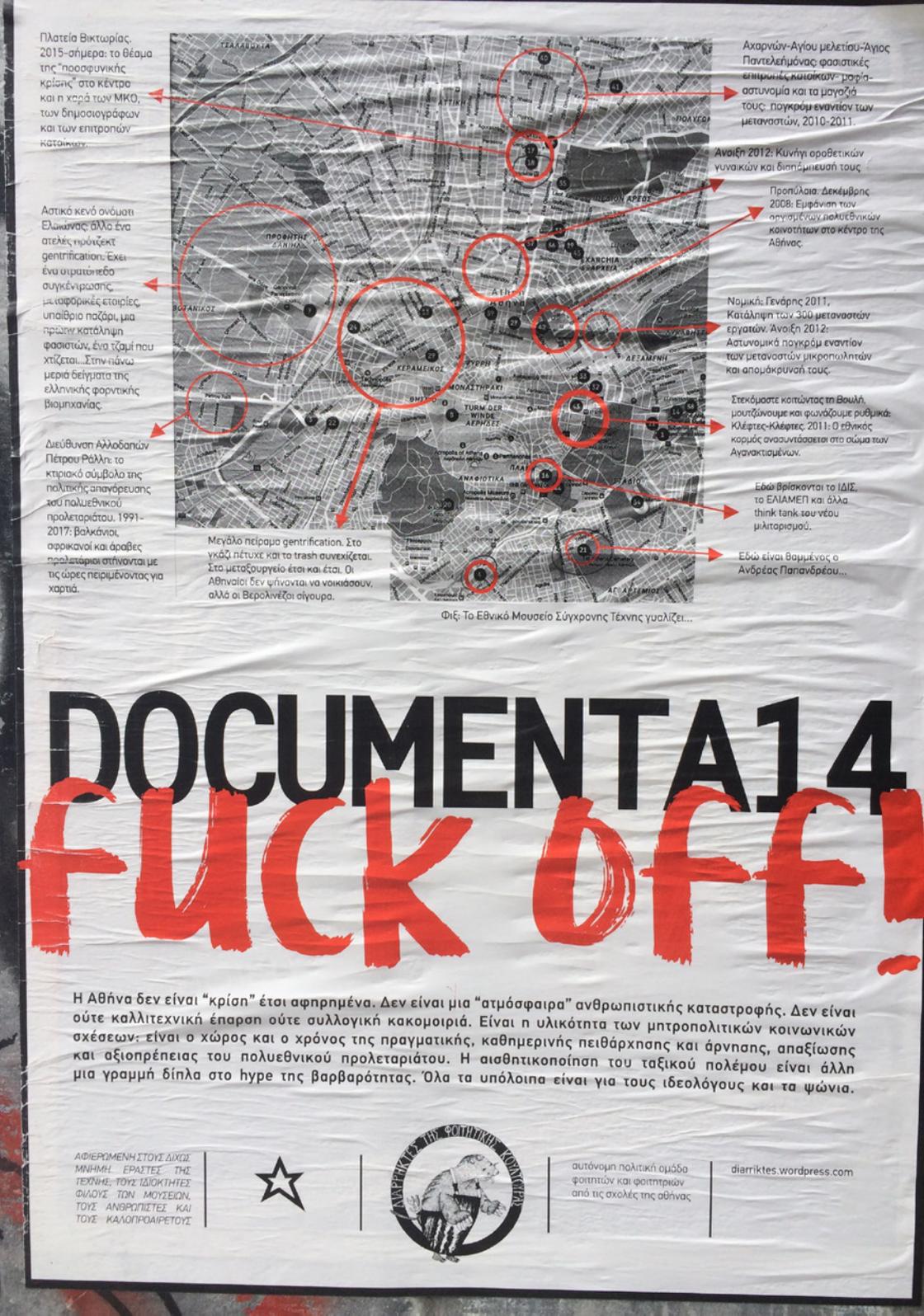


non-localizable monologue that absorbed visitors into the “minor” historical narratives valued by Athens natives.¹⁰ The work thus seemed to target art world visitors rather than locals, with its trilingual murmurings oftentimes literally translating for non-Greek-speaking viewers. In contrast, the Kassel portion of Pope.L’s work seemed to rely more on literary texts such as Grimm’s fairy tales, perhaps reflecting the perceived familiarity of German culture versus a relatively unknown Greece, needing to be accessed ethnographically.

Whispering Campaign seemed to demand a certain attentiveness to its setting, especially given that some commentators understood it precisely as “a new work to address the liminal status of refugees and immigrants, specifically for documenta 14.”¹¹ Indeed, one could understand the entire Athens portion of documenta 14 as a site specific gesture on the part of artistic director Adam Szymczyk and his international team of curators. Szymczyk stated that holding part of documenta in Athens was a direct response to perceptions of “power dynamics of a crumbling Europe,” as well as to “pressing issues of migration, citizenship and identity.”¹² Yet many of the documenta venues and sites participated in bolstering traditional symbols of national power, in their most hackneyed 19th-century form, with the opera house, the neoclassical cemetery, the antique stadium operating as symbols of cultural excellence – metonymically extending to political might.

But of course Athens itself had different ideas. While critic Amandas Ong noted the presence of “Crapumenta” graffiti, “DOCUMENTA14 fuck off!” was another favorite seen plastered on walls across the city, particularly at the edges of official venues: Athens’ unconscious.¹³

Img. 1 "DOCUMENTA 14 FUCK OFF" poster by diariktes on wall outside Documenta exhibition at Athens Polytechnic. <https://diariktes.wordpress.com/2017/05/24/documenta14-fuck-off/> Athens, Greece, May 2017. Photograph by Manol Gueorguiev



DOCUMENTA 14 FUCK OFF!

Η Αθήνα δεν είναι "κρίση" έτσι αφηρημένα. Δεν είναι μια "ατμόσφαιρα" ανθρωπιστικής καταστροφής. Δεν είναι ούτε καλλιτεχνική έπαρση ούτε συλλογική κακομοιριά. Είναι η υλικότητα των μητροπολιτικών κοινωνικών σχέσεων: είναι ο χώρος και ο χρόνος της πραγματικής, καθημερινής πειθάρχησης και άρνησης, απαξίωσης και αξιοπρέπειας του πολυεθνικού προλεταριάτου. Η αισθητικοποίηση του ταξικού πολέμου είναι άλλη μια γραμμή δίπλα στο ηγρε της βαρβαρότητας. Όλα τα υπόλοιπα είναι για τους ιδεολόγους και τα ψώνια.

ΑΦΙΕΡΩΜΕΝΗ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΔΙΚΟΥΣ ΜΗΜΗΝ ΕΡΑΣΤΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ, ΤΟΥΣ ΙΔΙΟΚΤΗΤΕΣ ΦΙΛΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΜΟΥΣΕΙΩΝ, ΤΟΥΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΣΤΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΚΑΛΟΠΡΟΑΙΡΕΤΟΥΣ

★

ΑΥΤΟΝΟΜΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΟΜΟΔΟ ΦΟΙΤΗΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΦΟΙΤΗΤΡΙΩΝ ΑΠΟ ΤΙΣ ΣΧΟΛΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΘΗΝΑΣ

diariktes.wordpress.com

And while found vocalizations of *Whispering Campaign* purported to offer just such a view of Athens' unconscious, the work's locations were also predominantly institutions of "high" culture: Greece's National Museum of Contemporary Art; the Athens Conservatory; and the Megaron concert hall, which hosts opera and ballet and is located adjacent to the U.S. embassy.¹⁴ Even the outdoor sites for *Whispering Campaign* – for example, the late-Hellenistic/early Roman-era Panathenaic Stadium and the 19th-century First Cemetery of Athens – alerted documenta visitors to Greece's cultural patrimony.

Whispering Campaign's presence in Pedion tou Areos park offered something different, with a tent city of migrants and drug users mere meters away from a heroic statue of a Greek monarch. The park is situated on the spot where 19th-century revolutionaries fomented an independence movement that brought King Otto I (originally German) to the helm of the Greek state. At the spot where Pope.L's *Whispering Campaign* was marked on the documenta map, the park featured a statue of King Constantine I (originally Danish-Russian), the country's acting ruler during Greece's Megali Idea [Great Idea] of territorial gain. The Megali Idea was an exercise in hubris that resulted in a devastating loss to Turkish forces in the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922. This defeat ushered in a bi-national ethnic cleansing that marked Greece's "first" refugee crisis, as Anatolian Greeks (marked not by language or ethnicity but by the Greek Orthodox religion) flooded into the country from Izmir/Smyrna and beyond. Meanwhile, Hellenic Turks (similarly identified by their religion, as Moslem) were kicked out of Greece and returned to their Turkish "homeland."¹⁵ With the contemporary refugee "crisis" – pressures on an economically weakened Greek state, European Union directives guiding actions of the local police, and a Turkey-E.U. agreement sending thousands of refugees "back across the Aegean"¹⁶ – there are echoes of this earlier treaty. A Europe cleansed of Moslems. Greece as a staging ground for the ebb and flow required to make this vision of Europe a reality. At documenta, the Pedion tou Areos park participated in signifying

the Greek nation for a foreign audience, but not because it spurred a newfound appreciation for the modern history of the nation. In failing to hear the *Whispering Campaign*, one could still stumble upon Greece's crises of unalleviated migration, homelessness, and addiction – an encounter with the tent city in Pedion tou Areos was itself a microcosm of precisely the "pressing issues" documenta sought to address, though one absent from any official map.

Pope.L's project succeeded because it failed; the work was not, it seems, intended to foreground the specific dissonances visible in Pedion tou Areos. And it failed because Pope.L applied a trope of social practice – a performative collision of grand narrative history and lived experience, in which contemporary lives were displayed with the same gravitas as a country's myths – in a setting with which he was unfamiliar. One can imagine a nearly identical work by Pope.L set in the United States, with performances and sound recordings drawn from historical sources and contemporary voices, installed alongside a statue of George Washington, at the National Mall, in Arlington Cemetery, at the National Gallery of Art, et cetera. And – for better or worse – given Pope.L's identity as African American, these sound installations would have been understood as a pointed critique of normative (white) American history.¹⁷ (Even more so at present, given tensions over historical statuary, monuments, and memorials.) This would not necessarily be a successful artwork itself, but one steeped in lived histories of place and space: Washington, D.C., as a capital city constructed in large part by enslaved Afro-descendants. For socially-engaged artworks to work, one seems to require a certain familiarity with local histories, a familiarity lacking in Pope.L's Athens work, despite good intentions and a relatively lengthy research phase.

This is not to say that an artist must work from personal experience, or in the role of representing some aspect of identity. But to create a "social practice," the artist must know what things signify for people, the local instinctive response to a phrase, a site, an image, that comes from familiarity, even intimacy, with a given

social setting, its lifeways, its habitus.¹⁸ Part of what social practice often ends up doing is an act of translation between a selected subculture and the art world, typically unfamiliar with that subculture (another point of critique lies in the problem of what counts as subculture versus mainstream for that art audience, but that is beyond the bounds of this essay). Social practice is about blurring social practices of the art world with social practices that seem to lie outside it, and the artist must be fluent in both. In Athens, a lack of fluency weakened the artwork, neutralizing its aims.



Rick Lowe's *Victoria Square Project*

Meandering through an L-shaped pedestrian street not far from Victoria Square: the same group of five, plus one more, a Malian migrant traversing Athens without proper papers. Now our merry band was two tiny children plus four adults from three continents (North America, Europe, Africa). The goal had been to eat grilled octopus, but an incongruous glassy gallery space caught the eye – a corner storefront diagonal to a small restaurant and little else. It was a documenta work, by American artist Rick Lowe.

At the moment, it housed an exhibition of Ukrainian embroi

Img. 2 Visitors standing on the corner near Rick Lowe's *Victoria Square Project*. Athens, Greece, May 2017. Photograph by Manol Gueorguiev

dery (from the private collections of “distinguished Ukrainian folk artists” Daria Stasiouk and Diana Novak) and a Tanzanian woman doing piecework in the window, a sort of living mannequin who seemed amused at the whole endeavor – and who was just as much on display as the embroideries around her. Rick Lowe was there to meet an Albanian man for a game of chess. The man does not speak English, and Lowe does not speak Albanian, so they came together on the chessboard, an event Lowe described in glowing terms as fulfilling the aims of his work.

In contrast to Pope.L, Rick Lowe’s work was more recogniz-



Img. 3 Rick Lowe, *Victoria Square Project*. Athens Greece, May 2017
 Photograph by Manol Gueorguiev

able as social practice, as a work that activated an underused space via art in order to drive community formation and economic growth. The gallery's location was chosen based on its proximity to Victoria Square, a central Athens plaza frequented by migrants, and also a site of open-air drug use – as with Pedion tou Areos park, one often encounters drug use and migrants together in Athens, since the public spaces that feel available for migrants are often sites visibly less patrolled by the state apparatus.

Lowe's gallery hosted events and temporary installations, many focused on refugee and immigrant communities in Athens. The project also included a neighborhood newsletter of sorts, a bilingual documenta-published, weekly newspaper that profiled



Img. 4 Rick Lowe playing dominoes with unnamed Albanian man in front of Victoria Square Project; unnamed woman does textile work in window behind them. Athens, Greece, May 2017
 Photograph by Manol Gueorguiev

local business owners and reported small news from the area. The publication seemed to enact Lowe's desire for his gallery to be welcomed into the neighborhood, and also offered a low-key "buy local" effort, a squishy attempt to address the economically down-trodden state of the city. Lowe's work was thus obviously engaged with local twinned crises: simultaneously addressing lack of social support systems for migrants, and Greece's economic fragility. Yet the very means Lowe introduced to address these issues were not local, operating instead through a generic mode of so-called social practice.

Lowe described the *Victoria Square Project* as a "social sculpture."¹⁹ The nod to Joseph Beuys is apt, since Beuys offered a similarly vague and dislocated form of "the social" that initially operated from his particular, ambiguous position in postwar Germany, but gave way to a broadly utopian scheme. Beuys' work consistently took a seeming specificity of experience, of history, and converted it to the generic, as with his shamanistic invocations of the German military body qua body.²⁰ In Beuys' formulation this body became something itself vulnerable and able to be rescued; the body was thus reducible to a blood-filled, breathing being succored in "fat and felt," rather than an active a political agent in the particular context of World War II-era Germany. Likewise, for all his involvement in German party politics throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, Beuys ultimately sublimated pernicious questions of social conflict into generic Romantic proclamations of creativity as panacea: "Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler."²¹

In these feints at political work, Beuys demonstrated a capacity to recognize and energize nascent forces, at least in a context he knew well. When he harnessed the burgeoning student movement around the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in 1967 to found the short-lived Deutsche Studentenpartei, he demonstrated a savvy understanding of the hyper-local conditions that can drive political activity. However, as time went on, and especially in an art context, such efforts became illustrative and allegorical. For documenta 5 in

1972, Beuys presented *Boxkampf für direkte Demokratie* [Boxing Match for Direct Democracy], in which he publicly boxed against art student Abraham David Christian Moebuss, performing the bellicose triumph of direct democracy over the parliamentary system.²² Meanwhile, a "rose for democracy" anchored Beuys' "Office of the Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum" in documenta's Museum Fridericianum, a symbolic and avowedly aesthetic gesture unmoored from any specific local concerns. Furthermore these gestures are, as Benjamin H. D. Buchloh has pointed out, compensatory: "the loss of the grounding of culture in ritual and hence the destruction of the legitimacy and credibility of religion ... were compensated now by an artistic reaction formation that attempt[ed] to reinvigorate the ritualistic dimension of artistic practices and performances by imbuing the artist with the public role of the priest, the shaman, the redeemer of spirituality."²³ In postwar Germany, Beuys granted politics the discarded hallmarks of religious theatricality – a boxing match standing in for the liturgy and a rose as banal substitute for the crucifix – but suppressed actual political content.

A compensatory gesture also haunted Rick Lowe's *Victoria Square Project*, which displayed a similar sort of generic engagement with its setting, with some indistinct idea of "the social." In the formulation of *Victoria Square Project*, the setting was Athens, which – at least in global clichés – signifies migration, which signifies negotiating difference. Lowe spoke of his pleasure at the spontaneous cross-cultural interactions that arose at *Victoria Square Project*: as an example, he described regularly playing dominoes with an Albanian man. Yet as documenta curator Monika Szewczyk describes, Lowe's best-known project, the Houston-based *Project Row Houses*, comes with an almost identical (readymade) story: Lowe's "mentor, the artist, scavenger, and local [Houston] sage Jesse Lott" comes to play dominoes regularly at Lowe's ongoing Houston-based social artwork, *Project Row Houses*.²⁴

Thus Lowe transplanted a model of social interactions from

Houston to the Athens *Victoria Square Project*, offering viewers/participants a blueprint for positive – and sometimes scripted – social engagement with people unlike themselves.²⁵ And what more poetic way to negotiate difference than a wordless game of strategy in which victory comes with an utterance? In this sense, the chess game was as allegorical and empty as Beuys' rose. This anecdote asserts a high modernist claim to universality, with "the social" as a vaguely humanitarian affect felt around the globe. Is a mute board game the new black square? But of course there is substantial difference between a dominoes match between two men who share a multitude of cultural references (though perhaps divergent access to opportunity) and the same native tongue, and a chess game whose defining quality is the utter impossibility of dialogue.

Lowe's best-known work, *Project Row Houses* (1993–), is also resolutely compensatory, as an arts-funded social welfare organization centered in a low-income, predominantly African American community of Houston that acts an umbrella organization for activities including art residencies, site-specific installations, community arts programming, housing for young mothers, and a Community Development Corporation constructing affordable rentals. This work draws upon financial support from governmental entities such as National Endowment for the Arts, corporations such as Home Depot, private foundations, and wealthy families such as the Menils; the figure of "artist as visionary" in this newly-imagined public role as a channel, diverting wealth from its current unequal distribution, to trickle furtively towards areas of need. This mode of artmaking, social practice, compensates for the loss of a "social safety net," the loss of the legitimacy and credibility of the state in the face of contemporary economic "realities." If wealth is concentrated in the hands of would-be art patrons, social practice artists transform patronage into something different.

In Athens, there was a sense that Documenta itself operated as an exploitative model of social practice, as a tragically unfocused and even immoral performance of the economic imbalance of

power between Greece and Germany. For Greek curator iLiana Fokianaki, "The binary between north and south Europe is a profitable one for a 'classical' institution such as Documenta to exploit. Athens is just the place to experiment, after its seven very public years of financial chaos."²⁶ But as former Greek Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis countered, "The point is not that they [Documenta] came but rather how they came to Athens, whom they went to bed with (metaphorically), and how they used a seemingly progressive left-wing critique of what is happening in Greece to willingly or unwillingly propagate the very process that is causing the country's crisis. In the name of seeking solutions they became part of the problem."²⁷ One of the poetically lucid posters condemning documenta proposed a similar critique of the art world's "anthropological" approach to Athens, with the exhibition offering "a psychogeography of a city in crisis."²⁸ Various condemning a roster of figures including documenta 14 curator Adam Szymczyk, Athens mayor Giorgos Kaminis, and Documenta's curator of public programs, Paul B. Preciado, the poster mentioned only a single artist: Rick Lowe. For the authors of the poster, Lowe's work seemed emblematic of the exhibition as a whole: "Victoria Square is the topos where prospector [also, pejoratively, bargain hunter, or gold digger] Rick Lowe seeks the ties that bind art and the new entrepreneurship."²⁹

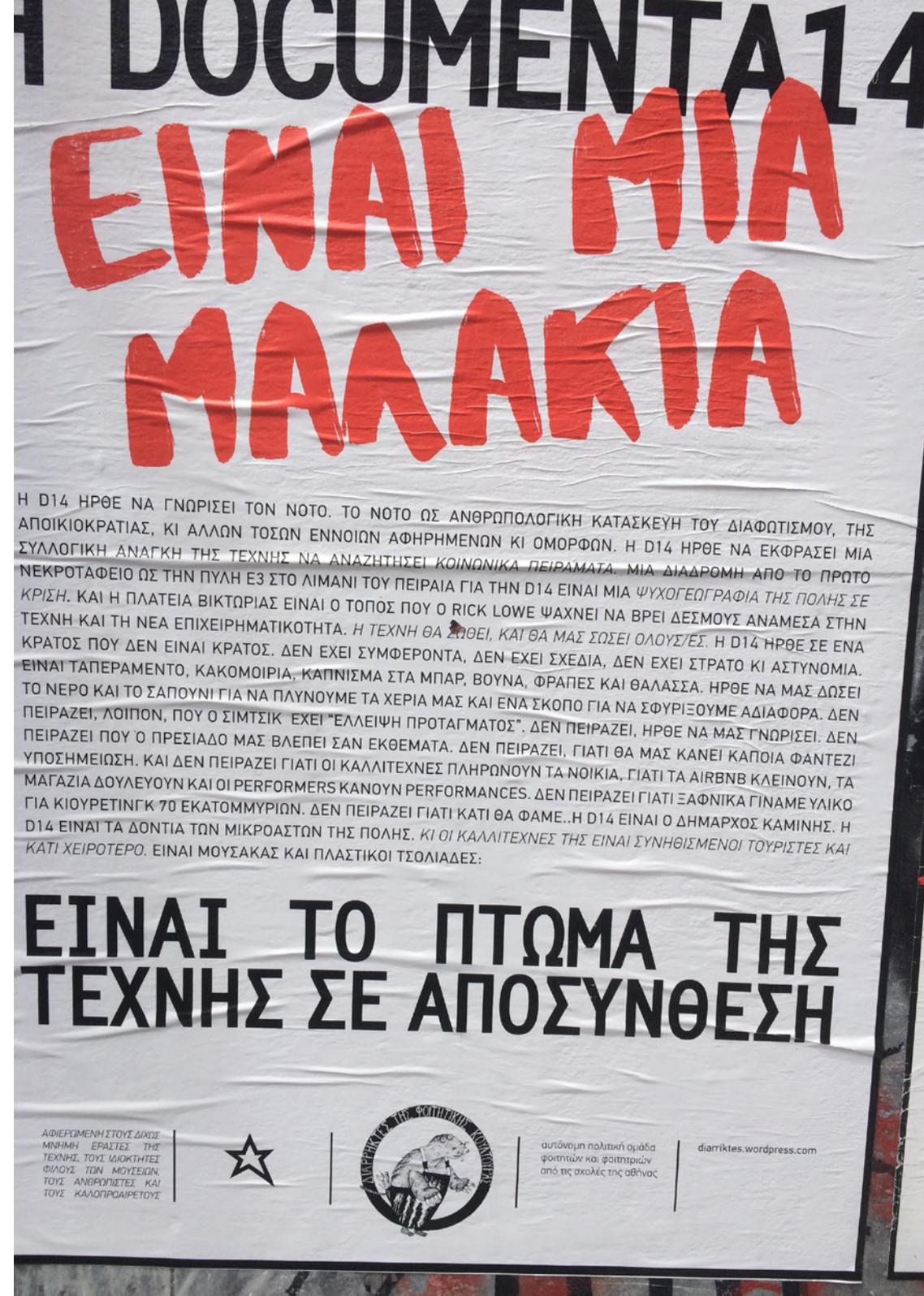
If social practice necessitates the artist as visionary, there is a crucial difference between the Beuysian figure of the shaman and the social practice artist's requirement to be finding or representing "the people." It is not as a lone shaman retreating to his studio, but as a priest with his wayward flock that the social practice artist acts, guiding a quasi-congregation towards the salvation of art world monies. Social practice art uses people as materials, and it is validated through the identities and attributes of the people who are its subjects – or objects.³⁰ It almost doesn't matter which form the artwork takes (interviews, parties, a storefront gallery, a dice game), so long as it somehow involves people who are not already inhabitants of the "art world." On the other hand, with social practices, the

identities of the people involved can also come to be meaningless, with the only criterion of social practice is that it involves someone – anyone – who is not already in that art world.³¹ Thus the transposition of the dominoes opponent, from a local Houston sage to a wordless Albanian man in Athens.

EU / US

It's telling that two North American artists working in social practice floundered at a temporary mega-exhibition in Europe. With its robust social welfare systems, dense cities, and comparatively generous state funding for the arts, the European Union seems a natural setting for social practices. Thus, the ability to effect collisions between art and “the social” benefits from a number of sympathetic organizations and funding streams that are practically non-existent in the United States. In the U.S., social practice artists are more likely to draw upon grants and funding from private foundations, businesses, and corporations, as Rick Lowe has done with his Houston-based *Project Row Houses*.³² In the U.S., the tensions of neoliberal society thus constitute the very forms and conditions of possibility for social practice art. On the one hand, it is thus difficult to avoid a certain generality or superficiality in social practice art which is itself supported (financially, institutionally) by the very economic machinations and social hierarchies it purports to address.³³ But the best social practice art focuses intently on these conditions, making the precise mechanisms of financial flows and privileged access to political agency the material of the artworks. And perhaps this was what felt lacking in these Athens works by William Pope.L and Rick Lowe, that in transposing their mode of art making from the United States to Europe, these tensions fell away.

Img. 5 "H DOCUMENTA 14 ΕΙΝΑΙ ΜΙΑ ΜΑΛΑΚΙΑ" poster by diariktes on wall outside Documenta exhibition at Athens Polytechnic. <https://diariktes.wordpress.com/2017/05/18/h-documenta14-einai-mia-malakia/> Athens, Greece, May 2017. Photograph by Manol Gueorguiev



Η D14 ΗΡΘΕ ΝΑ ΓΝΩΡΙΣΕΙ ΤΟΝ ΝΟΤΟ. ΤΟ ΝΟΤΟ ΩΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΣΚΕΥΗ ΤΟΥ ΔΙΑΦΩΤΙΣΜΟΥ, ΤΗΣ ΑΠΟΙΚΙΟΚΡΑΤΙΑΣ, ΚΙ ΑΛΛΩΝ ΤΟΣΩΝ ΕΝΝΟΙΩΝ ΑΦΗΡΜΕΝΩΝ ΚΙ ΟΜΟΡΦΩΝ. Η D14 ΗΡΘΕ ΝΑ ΕΚΦΡΑΣΕΙ ΜΙΑ ΣΥΛΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΑΝΑΓΚΗ ΤΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ ΝΑ ΑΝΑΖΗΤΗΣΕΙ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΑ ΠΕΙΡΑΜΑΤΑ. ΜΙΑ ΔΙΑΔΡΟΜΗ ΑΠΟ ΤΟ ΠΡΟΤΟ ΝΕΚΡΟΤΑΦΕΙΟ ΩΣ ΤΗΝ ΠΥΛΗ Ε3 ΣΤΟ ΛΙΜΑΝΙ ΤΟΥ ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ D14 ΕΙΝΑΙ ΜΙΑ ΨΥΧΟΓΕΩΓΡΑΦΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΛΗΣ ΣΕ ΚΡΙΣΗ. ΚΑΙ Η ΠΛΑΤΕΙΑ ΒΙΚΤΩΡΙΑΣ ΕΙΝΑΙ Ο ΤΟΠΟΣ ΠΟΥ Ο RICK LOWE ΨΑΧΝΕΙ ΝΑ ΒΡΕΙ ΔΕΣΜΟΥΣ ΑΝΑΜΕΣΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΤΕΧΝΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΗ ΝΕΑ ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΜΑΤΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ. Η ΤΕΧΝΗ ΘΑ ΣΤΡΕΪ, ΚΑΙ ΘΑ ΜΑΣ ΣΩΣΕΙ ΟΛΟΥΣ/ΕΣ. Η D14 ΗΡΘΕ ΣΕ ΕΝΑ ΚΡΑΤΟΣ ΠΟΥ ΔΕΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΚΡΑΤΟΣ. ΔΕΝ ΕΧΕΙ ΣΥΜΦΕΡΟΝΤΑ, ΔΕΝ ΕΧΕΙ ΣΧΕΔΙΑ, ΔΕΝ ΕΧΕΙ ΣΤΡΑΤΟ ΚΙ ΑΣΤΥΝΟΜΙΑ. ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΑΠΕΡΑΜΕΝΤΟ, ΚΑΚΟΜΟΙΡΙΑ, ΚΑΠΝΙΣΜΑ ΣΤΑ ΜΠΑΡ, ΒΟΥΝΑ, ΦΡΑΠΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ. ΗΡΘΕ ΝΑ ΜΑΣ ΔΩΣΕΙ ΤΟ ΝΕΡΟ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΣΑΠΟΥΝΙ ΓΙΑ ΝΑ ΠΛΥΝΟΥΜΕ ΤΑ ΧΕΡΙΑ ΜΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΝΑ ΣΚΟΠΟ ΓΙΑ ΝΑ ΣΦΥΡΙΞΟΥΜΕ ΑΔΙΑΦΟΡΑ. ΔΕΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΖΕΙ, ΛΟΙΠΟΝ, ΠΟΥ Ο ΣΙΜΤΣΙΚ ΈΧΕΙ "ΕΛΛΕΙΨΗ ΠΡΟΤΑΓΜΑΤΟΣ". ΔΕΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΖΕΙ, ΗΡΘΕ ΝΑ ΜΑΣ ΓΝΩΡΙΣΕΙ. ΔΕΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΖΕΙ ΠΟΥ Ο ΠΡΕΣΙΑΔΟ ΜΑΣ ΒΛΕΠΕΙ ΣΑΝ ΕΚΘΕΜΑΤΑ. ΔΕΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΖΕΙ, ΓΙΑΤΙ ΘΑ ΜΑΣ ΚΑΝΕΙ ΚΑΠΟΙΑ ΦΑΝΤΕΖΙ ΥΠΟΣΗΜΕΙΩΣΗ. ΚΑΙ ΔΕΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΖΕΙ ΓΙΑΤΙ ΟΙ ΚΑΛΛΙΤΕΧΝΕΣ ΠΛΗΡΟΝΟΥΝ ΤΑ ΝΟΙΚΙΑ, ΓΙΑΤΙ ΤΑ ΑΙΡΒΝΒ ΚΛΕΙΝΟΥΝ, ΤΑ ΜΑΓΑΖΙΑ ΔΟΥΛΕΥΟΥΝ ΚΑΙ ΟΙ PERFORMERS ΚΑΝΟΥΝ PERFORMANCES. ΔΕΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΖΕΙ ΓΙΑΤΙ ΕΛΦΟΝΙΚΑ ΓΙΝΑΜΕ ΥΛΙΚΟ ΓΙΑ ΚΙΟΥΡΕΤΙΝΓΚ 70 ΕΚΑΤΟΜΜΥΡΙΩΝ. ΔΕΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΖΕΙ ΓΙΑΤΙ ΚΑΤΙ ΘΑ ΦΑΜΕ.. Η D14 ΕΙΝΑΙ Ο ΔΗΜΑΡΧΟΣ ΚΑΜΙΝΗΣ. Η D14 ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΑ ΔΟΝΤΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΜΙΚΡΟΑΣΤΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΛΗΣ. ΚΙ ΟΙ ΚΑΛΛΙΤΕΧΝΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΣΥΝΗΘΙΣΜΕΝΟΙ ΤΟΥΡΙΣΤΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΤΙ ΧΕΙΡΟΤΕΡΟ. ΕΙΝΑΙ ΜΟΥΣΑΚΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΛΑΣΤΙΚΟΙ ΤΣΟΛΙΑΔΕΣ:

ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΟ ΠΤΩΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ ΣΕ ΑΠΟΣΥΝΘΕΣΗ

ΑΦΙΕΡΩΜΕΝΗ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΔΙΧΩΣ ΜΝΗΜΗ ΕΡΑΣΤΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ, ΤΟΥΣ ΙΔΙΟΚΤΗΤΕΣ ΦΙΛΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΜΟΥΣΕΙΩΝ, ΤΟΥΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΣΤΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΚΑΛΟΠΡΟΑΙΡΕΤΟΥΣ



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Manol Gueorguiev studied at the University of Chicago and works at the intersection of performance, architectural installation, design, and post-socialist histories. Building upon long-term relationships with non-artists and non-actors, Gueorguiev's performances and set designs compel participants to examine their own involvements with political and social structures.

Comments

- 1 Miwon Kwon has described a subset of site-specific works in almost precisely this way: "consider[ing] another alternative model of site specificity . . . the site is not simply a geographical location or architectural setting but a network of social relations, a community The artist and his sponsors envision the art work as an integral extension of the community rather than an intrusive contribution from elsewhere." Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge 2002, p. 5–6. We would, however, differentiate Kwon's emphasis on the "mediation of the sponsoring institution" from more recent efforts (since the early 2000s) by artists to bypass established institutions and form their own, parallel social organizations, as with Theaster Gates' Rebuild Foundation and Tania Bruguera's Immigrant Movement International. Cf. Adrian Anagnost, *Formation: Social Practice and the Work of Theaster Gates*, in: *Art Journal*, Vol. 78, Summer 2019. See also Aimee Chang, *The Artist and the City: New Models for Creative Public Practice*, in: *Transforma: New Orleans 2005-2010*. New Orleans 2010, p. 11; Joshua Decter, *Art and the Cultural Contradictions of Urban Regeneration, Social Justice and Sustainability: Transforma Projects and Prospect*. 1 in *Post-Katrina New Orleans*, in: *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* Vol. 22 Autumn/Winter 2009, p. 16–34; and Diane Solway, *The Change Agent*, in: *W Magazine*, June/July 2013, p. 22, 91–101.

- 2 Nato Thompson, *Living As Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011*. New York 2012, p. 19.
- 3 See Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*. New York 2011, especially p. 11–14, 17–19. On the various terms adopted by academic homes that have incubated this type of work, see Chang 2010.
- 4 On the origins of this term in German-language art criticism, and on specific U.S.-based links to *Wochenklausur*, see also Anagnost 2019.
- 5 Anagnost 2019.
- 6 Lutz Hengst, Editorial: *Die documenta* (14) – *Horizonte und Perspektiven einer Ausstellung*, in: *Kunsttexte* Vol. 4, 2017. URL: <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/18452/19480/editorial.pdf> [28.03.2018].
- 7 Kimberly Bradley, *In Athens, Documenta 14 Throws Out the Blockbuster Art Show Formula — But Falls Flat*, in: *Artsy.com*, April 10th, 2017. URL: <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-athens-documenta-14-skips-art-world-spectacle-falls-flat> [26.07.2017].
- 8 Alexandros Gaglias, *Pedion tou Areos: The Epitome of Greek Mismanagement*, in: *Kathimerini.gr*, June 26th, 2015. URL: <http://www.ekathimerini.com/198415/article/ekathimerini/community/pedion-tou-areos-the-epitome-of-greek-mismanagement> [26.07.2017] Stratos Karakasis, *Η πορνεία και τα ναρκωτικά είναι πια κομμάτι του Πεδίου του Αρεως* [Prostitution and Drugs Are Now Part of the Pedion tou Areos], in: *Η Καθημερινή*, July 16th, 2016. URL: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/823597/article/epikairothta/ellada/h-porneia-kai-ta-narkwtika-einai-pia-kommati-toy-pedioy-toy-arews> [26.07.2017] The authors can attest to this.
- 9 Roberta Smith, *The Expansive Provocateur Pope.L*, in *Smaller, Potent Doses*, in: *The New York Times*, June 29th, 2017. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/29/arts/design/the-expansive-provocateur-pope-l-in-smaller-potent-doses.html> [26.07.2017] Other accounts give the subject of the whispers as "fragments of Greek myths" in Athens and "the musings of a flaneur taking in each city" in Athens and Kassel. For the former, see Amanda Ong, *The Successes and Failures of Documenta* in



- Athens, in: Apollo, May 16th, 2017. URL: <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/the-successes-and-failures-of-documenta-in-athens> [26.07.2017] On the latter, see Nate Freeman, Careful Whisper: Pope.L Discusses His Documenta Sound Work, Hidden Across Kassel, in: ARTnews, June 8th, 2017. URL: <http://www.artnews.com/2017/06/08/careful-whisper-pope-l-discusses-his-documenta-sound-work-hidden-across-kassel> [26.07.2017].
- 10 "There are characters in both cities that are worth writing about, and Pope.L, who was born in New Jersey in 1955, has learned about them with the help of locals and native speakers, and encoded them into information to be whispered. The totality could be understood as a minor history of the two documenta 14 cities." Monika Szewczyk, Pope.L, in: Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk (eds.), documenta 14: Daybook. New York: 2017.
- 11 Production/Exhibition Grant — Pope.L: Whispering Campaign, in: VIA Art Fund, June 29th, 2017. URL: <http://viaartfund.org/grants/pope-l-whispering-campaign> [26.07.2017]
- 12 Ong 2017. See also Anthi Argyriou, Can Art Respond Authentically to the Refugee Crisis? A Critical Overview from Greece, in: ArtSlant, August 25th, 2016. URL: <https://www.artslant.com/trn/articles/show/46417> [26.07.2017].
- 13 Or, in the words of Lutz Hengst, ". . . zahlreiche Dissonanzen mit lokalen Akteuren sind publik geworden," perhaps as a direct result of the fact that: "Adam Szymczyk hingegen hinterlässt zumindest nachträglich den etwas enttäuschenden Eindruck, an lokalen Folgen relativ desinteressiert gewesen zu sein." Lutz Hengst, Hypertrophien an historischer Hanglage: Itinerar und Nachbemerung zur documenta 14 in Kassel, in: Kunsttexte, Vol. 4, 2017. URL: <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/18452/19477/hengst.pdf> [28.03.2018].
- 14 The institutional spaces seem to have been selected from the list of documenta partners/venues, as enumerated in Documenta 14 Introduces Institutional Partners in Athens — And Venues of the Exhibition, in: Biennial Foundation, March 26th, 2017. URL: <http://www.biennialfoundation.org/2017/03/documenta-14-introduces-institutional-partners-in-athens-and-venues-of-the-exhibition> [26.07.2017].
- 15 VI. Convention concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations, in: Treaty of Peace with Turkey, and Other Instruments; Signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923. London 1923, p. 175-186. See also Bruce Clark, Twice a Stranger: The Mass Expulsions that Forged Modern Greece and Turkey. Cambridge 2006; and Lynn M. Tesser, Ethnic Cleansing and the European Union: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Security, Memory and Ethnography. New York 2013.
- 16 Jennifer Rankin, EU Strikes Deal with Turkey to Send Back Refugees, in: The Guardian, March 18th, 2016. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/18/eu-strikes-deal-with-turkey-to-send-back-refugees-from-greece> [20.01.2018] Patrick Kingsley, Refugee Crisis: What Does the EU's Deal with Turkey Mean? in: The Guardian, March 18th, 2016. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/18/eu-deal-turkey-migrants-refugees-q-and-a> [20.01.2018].
- 17 On Pope.L's resistance to readings of his work as pre-framed, or over-determined, by identity, see William Pope.L, Bocio, in: Mark H. C. Bessire (ed.), William Pope.L: The Friendliest Black Artist in America. Cambridge 2002, p. 70–73, first presented as William Pope.L, Bocio, paper presented at: Issues in African Contemporary Art, Institute of Contemporary Art, Maine College of Art, Portland, Maine, March 25th, 2000. See also Mark H.C. Bessire, The Friendliest Black Artist in America, in Bessire 2002; and Chapter 5 of Darby English, How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness. Cambridge 2007.
- 18 This is sometimes even, as Molly Warnock has insisted, a prerequisite for visual recognition itself. Responding to Sebastian Egenhofer's discussion of Gestalt in Martin Kippenberger's paintings, Warnock argued that Gestalt must be considered with regards to cultural specificity; in Kippenberger's paintings, certain passages of pink paint only emerge as the figures of pork medallions upon a background within the specific West German context for which those objects are legible. Sebastian Egenhofer, Thoughts about Kippenberger, paper presented at: Narrating European Art 1945/1989, Department of Art History,



University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, February 9th–11th, 2012. Similarly, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh would identify Joseph Beuys' "use of sausages, brown paint, domestic and medical objects, the peculiar hybrid between the wounded corporeal matter and the industrial object" as rooted in "the peculiar transitory moment of the lower Rhine regions suspended between artisanal and industrial forms of production embedded in an agricultural or rural environment that still permeated everyday life into the postwar period." However, Buchloh continues, "it is also important to recognize that it is precisely the conventionality with which Beuys, or shall we say his interpreters, reinvests in the gesture of the found object, reinvests in the gesture of the serialization of the ready-made, the matter, the procedure, and repositions them in nodes of metaphorical meaning that makes Beuys and others of national superiority. Or if one wants to flip that argument, I would say that makes him an artist of regional interest." Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Reconsidering Beuys: Once Again, in: Gene Ray (ed.), *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*. New York 2001, p. 86.

19 See URL: [http://victoriasquareproject.gr\[26.05.2018\]](http://victoriasquareproject.gr[26.05.2018]).

20 On Beuys' leveling of the sovereign and the abject in the body of the "sacrificial figure," see Rosalind Krauss, N: No to . . . Joseph Beuys, in: Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois (eds.), *Formless: A User's Guide*. New York 1997, p. 143–146. See also Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique, in: *Artforum* Vol. 18, January 1980, p. 35–43, reprinted in Ray 2001, p. 199–211. In Buchloh's reappraisal of Beuys' work in the same volume, he admits that, while "earlier Beuys interpreters wanted to construct him in terms of a transhistorical genius by arguing that his work could be most adequately associated, and compared with, figures such as Leonardo Da Vinci or the tradition of German Romanticism," that "these interpretive models [, though] still operative . . . have now given way to an almost exclusive concern with Beuys as the first German, if not the first European artist, to have incorporated reflections on recent political German

history." Buchloh 2001, p. 76. However, Buchloh continues to argue that, "Beuys from the very beginning . . . insisted on folding formal parameters that artists of both the historical avant-garde as much as those of the postwar neo-avant-garde had defined as formal, as structural, as antimetaphorical, as antinarrative, back into the parameter of the mythical. . . . [Beuys] metaphorically reverted backward into humanism." Buchloh 2001, p. 82.

21 On the "generic" quality of Beuys' work, Buchloh has claimed that, "Beuys' model of meaning exchanges specificity of perceptual structure and formal organization for generality, that is, verifiable conditions of procedure, matter, material, and formal organization for unverifiable pretences for the works, more or less infinite range of readings." Buchloh 2001, 84.

22 Andrea Gyorody, *The Medium and the Message: Art and Politics in the Work of Joseph Beuys*, in: *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture*, Vol. 7, What was Politics in 68? A Special Issue on the West German Sixties, 2014, p. 117–137. See also Cara Jordan, *The Evolution of Social Sculpture in the United States: Joseph Beuys and the Work of Suzanne Lacy and Rick Lowe*, in: *Public Art Dialogue* Vol. 3, 2013, p. 144–67.

23 Buchloh 2001, p. 88.

24 Monika Szewczyk, Rick Lowe, in: Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk (eds.), *documenta 14: Daybook*. New York 2017.

25 Already in 2004, critic Claire Bishop offered a stinging critique of this model of "immanent togetherness." Claire Bishop, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, in: *October*, Vol. 110, Fall 2004, p. 51–79.

26 iLiana Fokianaki and Yanis Varoufakis, "We Come Bearing Gifts" — iLiana Fokianaki and Yanis Varoufakis on Documenta 14 Athens, in: *Art-agenda*, June 7th, 2017. URL: [http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/d14/\[21.04.2018\]](http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/d14/[21.04.2018]).

27 Fokianaki and Varoufakis 2017.

28 diariktes, H documenta 14 είναι μια μαλακία, in: *Διαρρήκτ(ρ)ιες της Φοιτητικής Κουλτούρας*, May 24th, 2017. URL: [https://diariktes.wordpress.com/2017/05/24/documenta14-fuck-off/\[21.04.2018\]](https://diariktes.wordpress.com/2017/05/24/documenta14-fuck-off/[21.04.2018]).



29 diarriktes 2017.

30 See also Anagnost 2019.

31 Or, as Lutz Hengst has described of documenta 14's efforts to depart from Eurocentrism — or, we would say, to depart from a Eurocentrism wholly defined in terms of Central and Western Europe, with Greece and Eastern Europe as stand-ins for the Global South — it remains a subject within art discourse as well as within broader social contexts, “wo und wie 'das Volk' zu suchen und zu repräsentieren.” Hengst, Editorial. See also Kwon 2002, p. 138–142.

32 See Vicki Goldberg, In Houston, Rebuilding by Creating, in: The New York Times, July 16th, 1995.

33 See Adrian Anagnost, Parasitism and Contemporary Art, in: Pamela Fraser and Roger Rothman (eds.), Beyond Critique: Contemporary Art in Theory, Practice, and Instruction. New York 2017, p. 79–96.